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RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MINSK 000454

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [BO](#)

SUBJECT: KOZULINA NOT HUNGERSTRIKING

REF: A. 06 MINSK 731

[1](#)B. 06 MINSK 1213

[1](#)C. MINSK 028

[1](#)D. MINSK 440

[1](#)E. MINSK 352

Classified By: Ambassador Karen Stewart for reason 1.4 (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During a May 25 meeting with Ambassador, the wife of imprisoned opposition leader Aleksandr Kozulin denied rumors that she will go on political hunger strike. Irina Kozulina described her husband as politically engaged and his health as slowly improving following his two-month hunger strike last year. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On May 25, Ambassador met with Irina Kozulina, women's health advocate and wife of imprisoned former opposition presidential candidate Aleksandr Kozulin (Ref A), soon after Kozulina returned to Belarus following her two months of cancer treatment in the U.S. Kozulina denied rumors that she planned to begin a hunger strike to protest her husband's continued incarceration. However, she did confirm that she would fast -- eating no food and intermittently giving up water -- for one month as a form of alternative medicine to supplement her three-month supply of chemo-therapy and hormone treatment medications (provided to her by her U.S physicians). Noting that these doctors told her that these medications could prolong her life but could not cure her, Kozulina insisted that her alternative approach was absolutely necessary and serenely told Ambassador, "Everything is perfect. I feel free."

[1](#)3. (C) When asked about her husband's condition, Kozulina replied that Kozulin "feels well" but that his recovery following his 53-day political hunger strike last year is progressing slowly due to the poor-quality food provided at his prison (refs B and C). She noted that Kozulin remains actively engaged in politics by reading voraciously and has empowered his oldest daughter, Olga, with power of attorney to represent him at the May 26-27 democratic congress (septel). She added that Kozulin's former attorney and Belarusian Social Democratic Party "Gramada" (BSDP) Deputy Chair Igor Rynkevich would represent BSDP at the congress. Meanwhile, Kozulin and his current attorney Dmitriy Garatchko are considering a final appeal of his July 2006 conviction to GOB Prosecutor General Petr Miklashkevich, following the Belarusian Supreme Court's dismissal of his last appeal on May 21 (ref D).

[1](#)4. (C) In response to a question from Ambassador, Kozulina revealed that she had not received a reply to her request for amnesty for her husband from Presidential Administration First Deputy and Clemency Commission Chair Natalya Petkevich. (Note: During EUR DAS David Kramer's recent visit to Minsk, Petkevich indicated that the regime would consider amnesty

applications from political prisoners (ref E). End note.) Noting that our GOB contacts continue to tell us that Belarusian law requires prisoners themselves to apply for clemency, Ambassador assured Kozulina that the USG considers such "paperwork excuses" to be unacceptable and pledged to continue pressing the regime to release her husband and all other Belarusian political prisoners. Kozulina responded affirmatively to Ambassador's question whether the Embassy should once again attempt to visit her husband in prison and repeatedly expressed her deepest gratitude to the USG and the Embassy for all the United States continues to do for her family.

Comment

¶5. (C) During our meeting, Kozulina appeared frail but upbeat. Kozulina's personal courage and devotion to liberating her husband are inspiring. We will continue our efforts to visit him in prison, but will seek to make our request in a time and manner that does not detract from the appeal for his release.

Stewart